

NEW MEXICO Fire Information

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Lightning Sparks New Fires as Heat Persists



Alamogordo, New Mexico – Much of New Mexico continues to see near-record high temperatures and isolated thunderstorms have ignited numerous fires in the region. As of June 11, 2006, the Southwest Coordination Center reported 46 new fires, the majority of them resulting from lightning caused by thunderstorms. In New Mexico, a total of 27 new fires were reported over the weekend – 25 caused by lightning and two were human-caused.



The low percentage of human-caused fires about seven percent of the total number of fires started over the weekend was good news to Don Stadler of the Southwest New Mexico Fire Prevention Education Team. “The public should be commended for their vigilance regarding the fire danger. Preventing human-caused fires takes some of the workload off of suppression personnel, enabling them to focus on new starts from lightning.”



New fires can start several days after the occurrence of lightning. Often when lightning strikes, a fire might smolder or creep around the forest floor, only becoming active and visible when the temperatures heat up or winds increase. More fires may be detected in the coming days.



Thanks to the continued success of the initial attack efforts by firefighters, all of the new fires in the state were kept small, many less than an acre in size. The goal of initial attack is to suppress fires quickly, ideally keeping them to ten acres or less, and success depends on the location of the fire, fuels conditions, fire behavior, and the weather. Another important factor is the availability of suppression resources such as personnel, aircraft and engines.



With more hot weather and thunderstorms forecast for the upcoming week, the fire danger is not expected to abate. We ask the public to continue to be ‘fire-safe’ by using caution when engaging in any activity that has the potential to cause a fire and by obeying fire restrictions and closures.



Over the past several weeks, fire restrictions and closures have been placed upon federal, state, and tribal lands throughout New Mexico. For a current update on these actions and other fire-related information, check with New Mexico Fire Information at www.nmfireinfo.com or by calling 1-877-864-6985.

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